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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 ABIDJAN 001234

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KINSHASA PASS TO BRAZZAVILLE

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [IV](#)

SUBJECT: COTE D'IVOIRE: UN HIGH REP FOR ELECTIONS DISCUSSES  
ROAD FORWARD AFTER 1721

REF: ABIDJAN 1173

Classified By: Poloff Laura Taylor-Kale, Reasons 1.4 (b,d)

11. (C) SUMMARY. Gerard Stoudmann, UN High Representative for Elections, is cautiously optimistic that elections in Cote d'Ivoire will happen in 2007, but that positive scenario will require all the parties to exhibit substantially more political will than they have shown heretofore. He cautioned that the 2007 deadline will be built upon a very tight schedule with little room for delay at any stage of the process. Stoudmann also expressed regret that due to lack of funding his own contract ends in two weeks. See action request in paragraph 10. END SUMMARY

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Proposed Timeframe for Elections  
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12. (C) In a November 2 luncheon at the Ambassador's residence, UN High Representative for Elections in Cote d'Ivoire Gerard Stoudmann outlined the steps the Government of Cote d'Ivoire, UN bodies and the major Ivorian political actors need to take now to meet the October 31, 2007, deadline called for in UNSCR 1721. Stoudmann said that he and his team favor kicking off an aggressive public relations campaign on December 1 that would outline the ambitious 8-9 month identification/election list preparations the UN elections team envisions. This timeframe contrasts with the November 15 date privately proposed by PM Banny. Stoudmann stated that putting the Ivorian National Statistical service (INS) and other key institutions into shape technically would take until December for a credible process to be ready. The new sub-prefects participating in the audiences foraines will have to be identified and trained, and the 133 new judgeships created by Presidential decree (Abidjan 1173) will have to be operationalized and the judges themselves given (perhaps by the High Representative himself using the powers provided by 1721) the flexibility to function outside of their defined jurisdiction. The High Representative noted that very few Ivorians have valid identity cards, and that those cards would have to be replaced anyway by the new process, something poorly understood by most of the population.

13. (C) Stoudmann plans to implement a dual-track plan for national identification and voter registration which will overlap. In December the expanded audiences foraines would be launched and run for 2-3 months, while the voter registration process would start later and also run for 2-3 months. Both phases will end by mid-May. A provisional voting list would be ready by the end of May and the process of producing and distributing voting cards would commence (Note: PM Banny's team has dithered in choosing among the six companies bidding on the national ID project, potentially

adding yet additional delays and frustrating the UN elections team. End Note). The voting cards would be distributed by July 31, allowing three months for the preparations of elections.

¶4. (C) Pressed by the Ambassador as to whether this timeframe were realistic, Stoudmann readily acknowledged this to be a highly optimistic scenario and commented that the timeframe proposed leaves no room for the inevitable blockages bound to disturb the process. More importantly, the government and international groups managing the elections need to set a limited timeframe for national identification process and voter registration because it is impossible to register all of the estimated two million potential citizens (four million according to the New Forces and 500,000 according to the FPI) by October 31, 2007 as called for by UNSCR 1721. Stoudmann said that even using his ambitious timeframe in a best-case scenario, only about one million people would be identified. The international community must work towards reaching a rough 50% threshold for addressing the identity question for the elections. "The country cannot wait," he said, "for every last possible voter to be identified and enrolled." This compromise would have to be made clear to everyone ahead of time, and the process restarted after elections.

¶5. (C) Stoudmann expressed reservations as to the technical capacity of the National Institute of Statistics (INS). He said that the INS could participate in the process, but would need to be folded into a larger structure. Its governance is problematic as four of its top leaders are FPI activists, which could prejudice the impartiality of elections.

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Searching for Political Will

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¶6. (C) The High Representative believes the Prime Minister has the political will to move forward the tightly coordinated steps outlined above. Stoudmann remarked that simultaneous, or near-simultaneous disarmament would have to take place in order to allow election planning to go forward.

Initial disarmament would be relatively simple, with pre-groupment being completed in 1-2 weeks. This would allow moving forward on identification for approximately 6 weeks to act as a "down payment" encouraging the New Forces to go forward with DDR.

¶7. (C) Hitting this trifecta will not be simple, but the High Representative said there is some room for optimism. "Time is against everyone," he remarked. "Gbagbo is having trouble putting his people in the streets and Soro does not control his people. Ouattara's RDR, particularly the young members of the party, are not happy with him and his old-school governance style." Stoudmann said Chirac's Advisor on Africa Joubert told him that Bedie is living luxuriously in Paris waiting for the French government to put him back in power, leaving the Quay d'Orsay and the President incensed. Stoudmann said Gbagbo feels threatened by Banny most of all, and aims to exclude him from the process, making Banny fearful for his own safety. Stoudmann agreed with the Ambassador that Soro and the FN have made little to no effort to transform themselves into something other than a rebellion. Abroad since the end of September, Soro is apparently concerned for his safety and is preoccupied with how to handle his militia forces. Converging pressure on Gbagbo and Soro may create the kind of dynamic needed to drive main contending groups (the FPI and the NFs) into accepting a deal on proceeding with elections coupled with disarmament.

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There's A Chance(  
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¶18. (C) Stoudmann laid out three possible scenarios for the coming year. In the first, unlikely, scenario, the UN takes over and administers Cote d'Ivoire. Secondly, parties find a non-institutional solution where the UN is not involved, much like in Haiti with Aristide. However, who is likely to implement this scenario is unclear. The final and most realistic scenario involves a more proactive UN. The UN, the African Union, the US, and France would have to put more pressure on all the actors. Stoudmann conceded that France carries baggage on the Ivorian political scene, that President Chirac will be unwilling to negotiate with Gbagbo and that the impending elections season in France precludes any French flexibility on Cote d'Ivoire policy. Compaore of Burkina, in Stoudmann's estimation, is a key interlocutor, able, with his control over NF territories trade and economy, to "deliver" the NF and Soro in a way Mbeki could not.

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Frustration with Banny's Governance Style  
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¶19. (C) Stoudmann remarked that Banny is "very much a one man show," consulting with others sometimes but primarily acting unilaterally. Citing Banny's unilateral decision to move forward with the August 3 audience foraine (which resulted in significant violence and the eventual halt of the process), Stoudmann said this tendency causes frustration and Banny ends up marginalizing himself. Egotistical and bored with key details, Banny has made himself a principal FPI target. Stoudmann mused that while Banny has faults, "he is the best we have." The Ambassador agreed that the international community must work together to encourage Banny to consult more effectively.

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Funding Challenges for the Special Representative's Office  
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¶10. Since the UNSC did not agree to continue funding for the Office of the Special Representative for Elections, Stoudmann's office is out of funding and his own contract ends on November 16, requiring his departure. COMMENT: Were Stoudmann to leave this month, his departure would be a serious setback for the momentum of the Ivorian electoral process. Stoudmann confirmed that he has been approached about replacing Pierre Schori as the SRSG in Cote d'Ivoire, and he is seriously considering it. If he accepts the offer,

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his current position as HRE would be rolled into the SRSG job. ACTION REQUEST: Embassy Abidjan recommends that the Department request USUN to urge the Secretary General to move expeditiously on Stoudmann's contract, either as HRE or HRE/SRSG, so that there is no loss of momentum. END COMMENT  
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